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# Newsletter: The Center for Professional Ethics, Fall 1997

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## FALL 1997

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### DIRECTOR'S CORNER

by Robert P. Lawry

#### Religion and the Public Square

Several years ago I was shocked to discover a vast scholarly literature devoted to the proposition that the role of religion in "the public square" was a severely limited one. "The public square" is - to quote my colleague Bill Marshall - "the metaphorical location which hosts the process of political decision-making." Some argue that the reason for the limitation is epistemological. Since religious ideas are based on "faith" not "reason," so the argument goes, they are not accessible to non-believers; hence, these ideas may not be part of the otherwise democratic debate concerning public policy. I remember how incredulous I was about the general proposition. For as Justice Douglas said in a famous case 45 years ago: "(we) are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being." Beyond that historical statement lies, of course, the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution which guarantees both the "free exercise of religion" and "freedom of speech." On the other hand, the first amendment also forbids the government from making laws "respecting an establishment of religion." Moreover, some point to the bloody religious wars in pre-Enlightenment Europe (as well as at other times and places) and argue that the "psychological and sociological forces inherent in religious experience ... lead to intolerance and persecution." Well, yes, people have, in the name of religion, persecuted others and were (and are) intolerant of them. But persecution and intolerance are not phenomenon to be associated with religious as opposed to secular attitudes. Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot are names we associate with unspeakable persecution and intolerance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century - and no one associates these names or their wicked deeds with "religion." Still, there is something going on that has caused not only very bright but also very decent people to worry greatly about the influence of religion and religious ideas on public policy. At the moment, I am not altogether certain I understand the whole story as to why the debate about the place of religion in the public square has become so heated in recent years. But I aim to find out. And I aim to find out for two reasons:

1. I am certain that religious thought has contributed much to public policy issues in this country, and that it will contribute more. For example, everyone acknowledges the value of religious ideas during the historic battle over Civil Rights in the 1960's.
2. I am also certain that the effort to silence religious voices will produce only a backlash (some of it justified, some not), that will only increase the polarization and fragmentation that so marks the political landscape today.

The reason I raise this issue in this column is, I hope, obvious. The public policy debates to which many of our scholars do not want to invite religious thinkers are debates which have a huge moral dimension to them. Two recent issues come to mind immediately as examples: assisted suicide



and cloning. Religious thinkers diverge as much as secular thinkers on issues such as these (an important point in its own right.) Nevertheless, they offer an important moral perspective that we desperately need in our conflicted society. My colleague, Tom Murray, a member of the Presidents' National Bioethics Advisory Commission, commented recently that the group of religious leaders who testified before the commission on cloning were the most thoughtful and helpful group to appear before the commission.

Of course, there are intolerant and close-minded religious people too. But that is hardly the point. The question is: who shall be excluded from public policy debates? If we include the nutty and intolerant secularists, why not include those who speak from a religious perspective? There are wise and thoughtful people everywhere - and some of them surely are people of faith.

As a closing note, I want to say that I do think the question more complicated than can be indicated in a brief column like this. I have been spending a good bit of time this summer, reading religious-clause cases and the scholarly literature on the issue of religion in the public square. I will be holding forth on the subject in a more complete and, hopefully, nuanced way in a series of six public lectures I am giving this fall under the sponsorship of the Cleveland Ecumenical Institute for Religious Studies. They will be held on six consecutive Monday evenings from 7:30-9:30 p.m., beginning September 29. If you are interested in thinking about such things with me, you may call the Institute at 932-5815 for details.

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### *Ethics Institute Comes to an End*

In October, 1995 the CPE was given \$200,000 by The 1525 Foundation to fund a two year Summer Ethics Institute. The program would recruit mostly undergraduate professors from C.W.R.U. to commit to a month spent in reading and thinking about ethics and ethics pedagogy. The goal of the program was to help these individuals strengthen their knowledge of ethics; and to help them apply ethics to their own teaching specialties. This summer the 1525-CPE Summer Ethics Institute came to a successful conclusion.

During June, eleven professors and one graduate student (see pictures next page) took part in the program. Their diverse fields (ranging from Nursing to History to Art Education) helped to provide a backdrop for an interesting array of perspectives and experiences. The agenda followed a scheme very similar to last year's, but also incorporated some recommendations that the sixteen Ethics Fellows from 1996 suggested. The first week was an introduction to ethical theories, moral vocabulary and moral arguments. The second week consisted of discussions on religious traditions, lying and a lecture by the newly endowed Chaired Professor in Ethics, Dr. Caroline Whitbeck, on Professional Ethics. (See article on Chaired Professorship). Week three covered legal and distributive justice, the feminist critique, end of life issues and cloning. The last week came to a close with a session on "The Good Life" and four days devoted to pedagogy. Each Fellow gave a sample of a course they presently teach incorporating an ethics component. Utilizing the same teaching faculty as last year (Barbara Daly, School of Nursing, CWRU; William Deal, Religion Department, CWRU; Barbara Krasner, Philosophy Department, CWRU; Ed Lawry, Philosophy Department, Oklahoma State University; Robert Lawry, Director, Center for Professional Ethics, CWRU; Thomas Murray, Director, Center for Biomedical Ethics, CWRU; and Stephen Post, Center for Biomedical Ethics, CWRU) the program offered a stimulating collegial experience for the teachers as well as the Fellows.

With the completion of the Summer Ethics Institute, the CPE is contemplating how best to build on the foundations laid by this rare and exhilarating experience.



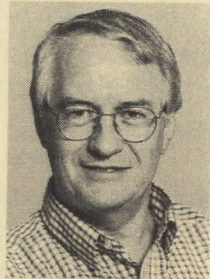
## The 1997 1525 - CPE Summer Ethics Fellows



(Left to right) Kimberly Adams-Davis, School of Nursing; Linda Ehrlich, Modern Languages & Literature; Atwood Gaines, Anthropology; Anne Matthews, Genetics.



(Left to right) Kathleen Montgomery, School of Nursing; Jonathon Sadowsky, History; Edith Schwede, American Studies - Graduate Student; Tim Shuckerow, Art Education/Art Studio.



(Left to right) Mark Smith, Pathology; Chris Town, Biology; Sharon Watts, School of Nursing; Nicholas Ziats, Pathology.

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The CPE would like to take this opportunity to thank those of you who made the Summer Ethics Institute a great success:

The 1525 Foundation; John Bassett, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, CWRU; Susan Jaros, Associate VP, Development and Alumni Affairs, CWRU; The 1525 - CPE Summer Ethics Fellowship Program Teaching Faculty; and the 1996 and 1997 Summer Ethics Fellows.

Thanks again for all your support!



## **CHAired PROFESSORSHIP IN ETHICS POSITION FILLED**

On June 14, 1997, the Center for Professional Ethics celebrated another major accomplishment not only for the Center but for the University as a whole. This was when the Board of Trustees of C.W.R.U. made the final decision regarding who would fill the position of the newly endowed Chair in Ethics in the Department of Philosophy.

The CPE is honored to announce that Dr. Caroline Whitbeck from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has accepted the appointment to the Elmer G. Beamer - Hubert H. Schneider chair in Ethics, effective July 1, 1997. Dr. Whitbeck's responsibilities will include that of a teacher, scholar, and administrative leader of the CWRU undergraduate initiative in professional and practical ethics.

As a teacher, she will teach courses in ethics at the undergraduate level; help to develop a curriculum which will extend the teaching of ethics to all disciplines; and work with other professors to incorporate the best practices of the Summer Ethics Institute into the teaching of ethics. As a scholar, she will do research and writing which will create opportunities for dialogue with other academic ethics programs throughout the country; consult with professionals in a variety of disciplines who are dealing with the practical application of ethics principles in the workplace and develop a wider national exposure for CWRU as a leader in the teaching in ethics. As an administrator, she will be working in tandem with Bob Lawry, Director of the CPE, to coordinate seminars and conferences on practical ethics; plan summer institutes and workshops to help faculty develop an ethics curriculum and prepare ethics materials to incorporate into their courses. Dr. Whitbeck will provide leadership for undergraduate faculty to become engaged in ethics education and for undergraduate students to include ethics as part of their total collegial experience involving course work, residence life, career planning, and student community service.

Caroline Whitbeck is a renowned scholar and innovative teacher. She is the creator of the World Wide Web Ethics Center for Engineering and Science as well as the author of a newly published textbook on Engineering Ethics.

Most of our readership will recall that the 1525 Foundation not only funded the Summer Ethics Fellowship Program that began in June, 1996 but also committed a gift of \$2,000,000 to establish the Chair in Ethics.

Once again, the Center welcomes Dr. Whitbeck to CWRU's campus. We are confident that Dr. Whitbeck's expertise will greatly enhance the undergraduate curriculum in ethics.



## NEWS & NOTES

### PROGRAMS

The University of Montana is pleased to announce a new graduate degree program - the M.A. in Philosophy. This degree, beginning 1997-98, with a Teaching Ethics Emphasis is designed for faculty currently teaching applied and professional ethics who lack philosophical background, ethics oversight and training officers from business, government and medicine, and for traditional graduate students who plan to teach applied and professional ethics in secondary and post-secondary settings. This 36-hour program is designed to be completed in one calendar year. Contact [ethics@selway.umt.edu](mailto:ethics@selway.umt.edu) for additional information.

### COURSES

The Southwestern Law Enforcement Institute of the Southwestern Legal Foundation has scheduled its "Train the Trainer" sessions for 1997-98. The first session is offered **Sept. 15-19** in Poughkeepsie, NY. Some of the topics will include: Higher Standards - Different Standards, Models for Ethical Decision-Making and Identifying Dilemmas and "Stakeholders." Successful completion of the course will authorize graduates to present the eight hour Law Enforcement Ethics and sixteen hour Ethics for Field Training in their own agencies. For information and additional dates and locations call (972) 664-3468.

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**November 9-14, 1997** the Center for Business Ethics at Bentley College in Waltham, MA is offering an executive development course titled, "Managing Ethics in Organizations." This course will provide practical advice and theoretical tools for creating an effective ethics program. Diversity, Ethics and the Law and Globalization are just a few of the topics of

discussion. Contact Kelly LeBlanc for more information at (617) 891-2981.

### CONFERENCES

Holt Companies is hosting its Fifth Annual Conference **October 15-17, 1997** at the Marriott River Center in San Antonio, TX. This conference addresses current ethics and compliance issues and provides opportunities for the exchange of information about innovations and existing practices in ethics, compliance and business conduct programs. Over 25 workshops will be featured. Call the EOA at (617) 891-2575 to receive additional information.

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The Fourth Annual International Conference Promoting Business Ethics, hosted by St. John's University in Jamaica, NY, will take place **October 30-November 1, 1997**. This conference, titled "From the Universities to the Marketplace: The business Ethics Journey," seeks to promote business ethics through excellence in academic research and the practical application of that research to business situations. Contact Mary Maury at (718) 990-6161 x7356 for more details.

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Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research has announced three upcoming lectures. The first titled "Reviewing and Revising the Expedited Categories of Research" will take place **November 6, 1997**. On **December 7, 1997** the topic will be "TUSKEGEE: Can Past Lessons Guide Researchers in the Future?" The last meeting is on **December 8-9, 1997** and is titled "Ethical Research in an Ethical Society." The first lecture will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Bethesda, MD. The other two will meet at the Sheraton Hotel in Boston, MA. Contact the PRIM&R at (617) 423-4112.



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